

V. ACHIEVING THE VISION

COMMUNITY CHARACTER- B

A. INTRODUCTION

(See Community Character A)

B. DEFINING NEWTOWN'S COMMUNITY CHARACTER

(See Community Character A)

C. COMMUNITY CHARACTER: ISSUES, GOALS AND ACTION AGENDA

The formation of community character is a process characterized by incremental change. Change is a constant in every community and the character of Newtown will continue to evolve as the community matures.

The elements of Newtown's community character held in high esteem by Town residents have been developed into community planning goals to be used as guidance for future activities that will affect





the quality of life in Newtown. These planning goals are an important foundation of the updated POCD, addressing the key issues of growth, conservation and the management of change. The following section identifies the issues affecting the key elements of Newtown's community character, defines community planning goals and recommends an action agenda to achieving those goals.






ISSUE #1: NEWTOWN'S PASTORAL AND RURAL LANDSCAPE

1. The visual character of Newtown's pastoral and rural landscape, including open fields, stone walls, ponds and streams, country lanes, forested areas, etc., makes a valued contribution to Newtown's Community Character.
2. Newtown's pastoral and rural landscape is altered one lot at a time, as undeveloped land is subdivided and built upon.
3. Some views of Newtown from State highways form lasting images of the Town's natural beauty and contribute to the Town's perceived community character.
4. The points of entry into Newtown from Brookfield, Bethel, Monroe and Southbury, I-84 interchanges 9, 10 and 11 provide initial impressions of Newtown's Community Character.
5. Reference Issue #4, Newtown's Farmland, in the Conservation of Natural Resources section of this 2003 POCD.

Goal Maintain the scenic characteristics of Newtown's "Pastoral and Rural Areas," and "Image Corridors" and enhance the "Gateways" to Newtown.

Action Agenda **Newtown's Pastoral and Rural Landscape**

Recommended Actions	Responsible Entity	PRIORITY				Required Resources	Status *
		On-Going	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Mid-Term (4-6 years)	Long-Term (7-10 years)		
Action: Define and map specific areas and roads critical to the preservation of Newtown's rural and pastoral landscapes.	PZC					Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Develop regulations and other means to protect these areas.	PZC					Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Pursue the use of design standards for the maintenance, upgrading and construction of town roads that contribute to the preservation of these critical roads.	BOS					Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Designate additional "Scenic Roads" to help preserve the pastoral, rural and scenic characteristics of Newtown's landscape.	PZC/BOS					Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>

Action: Utilize the State's Scenic Road Program to help protect the scenic vistas of State highways within identified "Image Corridors."	BOS					Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Create and adopt design guidelines for business and industrial areas.	PZC/EDC					Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Encourage the elimination of overhead utility lines.	PZC					Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Establish and implement an "Adopt-A-Spot" plan for points of entry and other key locations within the Town.	EDC					Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Critique and update the Special Exceptions section of Newtown's Planning and Zoning Regulations as an aid in maintaining the character of Newtown.	PZC					Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>

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ISSUE #2: APPEARANCE OF NEWTOWN'S CORRIDORS AND VILLAGE AREAS

1. The Borough is the historic center of Newtown and contributes significantly to the Town's community character.
2. Each of Newtown's four mixed-use hamlets (Botsford, Dodgingtown, Hawleyville and Sandy Hook) contributes in different ways to the character of the surrounding neighborhoods.
3. Most commercial uses serving the needs of Newtown's residents have been regulated to front on arterial highways, including Route 25 south of the Borough, Church Hill Road and along Route 6 west of Saw Mill Road.
4. Many commercial uses are located in freestanding buildings with shallow setbacks from the highway and parking lots in front. Other commercial uses are located in small shopping centers with similar design characteristics.
5. The common visual characteristic of many commercial uses, often located side-by-side, is a parking lot fronting the highway, which elicits an impression of strip-suburban development.
6. Because these commercial uses front on the most heavily traveled roadways in Newtown, their appearance contributes significantly to the daily perception of Newtown's community character, for residents and visitors alike.
7. Currently, some portions of these corridors have an unsightly appearance while others are quite attractive.

Goal: Preserve the mixed-use functions and enhance the visual appearance of Newtown's Corridors and Villages.

Action Agenda

Newtown's Villages and Corridors

PRIORITY

Recommended Actions	Responsible Entity	On-Going	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Mid-Term (4-6 years)	Long-Term (7-10 years)	Required Resources	Status *
Action: Prepare design criteria for use by developers proposing new and expanded commercial, industrial, multi-family and mixed-use development projects.	PZC/EDC		✱			Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Support Borough proposal to develop and implement Village District regulations that will govern the design of future development activities within the Borough and improve pedestrian mobility.	BB/BZC/PZC	✱				Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Develop design criteria for the Sandy Hook Design District and support streetscape enhancement proposals.	PZC		✱			Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Develop design criteria for the Hawleyville Design District.	PZC		✱			Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Determine the need in other Hamlets for streetscape specifications regarding sidewalks, curbing, street lighting, landscaping, and storm water management.	PZC			✱		Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Protect vacant lands surrounding the Borough and Newtown's four hamlets to preserve the historic settlement pattern of mixed-use villages and hamlets surrounded by open land.	PZC/CC	✱				Staff/Land Trusts	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Formulate regulations for mixed-use development that incorporate landscaped public plazas and design features that create pedestrian-friendly environments.	PZC/EDC		✱			Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Require attractive buffers between commercial and residential uses where mixed-use development is not possible and linkage is not warranted.	PZC		✱			Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>

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ISSUE #3: THE PUBLIC REALM

The quality of the public realm created by Town buildings, parks and monuments strongly influences the perception of Newtown's community character and the sense of community pride.

Goal: Enhance the public realm's contributions to Newtown's Community Character.

Action Agenda **Newtown's Public Realm**

Recommended Actions	Responsible Entity	PRIORITY				Required Resources	Status *
		On-Going	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Mid-Term (4-6 years)	Long-Term (7-10 years)		
Action: Develop a siting and design strategy for construction and upgrade of Town-owned buildings and facilities that will enhance the public's perception of Newtown's community character.	BS/PBSC	✦				Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Integrate new municipal facilities into the fabric of the surrounding neighborhood.	PZC	✦				Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Consider co-location of municipal facilities, such as parks associated with schools or other public buildings, to create community activity centers and provide additional opportunities for community interaction.	BOE/PRC	✦				Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>

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ISSUE #4: HISTORIC SITES AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

1. Newtown's Community Character is defined in part by the presence of historic structures and archaeological sites that provide links to the Town's past.
2. Some historical and archaeological resources in Newtown have been preserved for continued public enjoyment and education through local and municipal actions, including the establishment of historic districts in the Borough and Hattertown and the creation of the Orchard Hill Nature Center.

Goal: Preserve Newtown's historic sites and archeological resources.

Action Agenda **Newtown's Historic Sites and Archaeological Resources**

Recommended Actions	Responsible Entity	PRIORITY				Required Resources	Status *
		On-Going	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Mid-Term (4-6 years)	Long-Term (7-10 years)		
Action: Develop a Town-wide archeological resource inventory.	CC		✦			Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Incorporate archeological inventory information into Newtown's land-development regulatory process to protect valued historic sites and archaeological resources as protected open space.	PZC/CC	✦				Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>

Action: Explore the use of “village district” regulations and “delay of demolition” ordinances to further protect Newtown’s historic resources.	PZC/BOS/LC					Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Implement building permit options that encourage adaptive reuse of historic structures in commercial districts	BOS/PZC					Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Promote the utilization of historic tax credits for income-producing properties.	EDC					Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action: Support initiatives that encourage historic preservation such as historic register/historic place designations.	PZC/CC					Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>

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